DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 060 469 CG 006 850

AUTHOR	Russo, Nancy F.
TITLE	Sex and Race Differences in Attitudes Toward Sex Role Behaviors.
INSTITUTION	City Univ. of New York, N.Y. Richmond Coll.
SPONS AGENCY	American Institutes for Research (CRESS), Kensington, Md.
PUB DATE	Sep 71
NOTE	15p.; Paper presented at American Psychological Association convention, Washington, D. C., September 3-7, 1971
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	College Students; *Family Role; Females; Males; Marriage; *Parent Role; Perception; *Racial Attitudes; *Role Conflict; *Role Perception

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on some recent data which deal with attitudes toward sex role as held by male and female, black and white college students. Its purpose is to describe rather than to test hypotheses, but some general conclusions can be drawn from the results. The data were obtained from the questionnaire responses of 300 college students attending Howard and American Universities in Washington. The results support several general conclusions: (1) With respect to the effects of sex and race on the criterion variables of interest, evidence suggests the prevalence of a "cultural lag" in egalitarianism among males as compared with females. Although blacks are more traditional as measured by the Role Conception Inventory, when it comes to personal preferences, race has little effect and blacks are not more traditional than whites; (2) Attitudes toward housework and child care remain relatively traditional for the 4 groups while attitudes toward what could be called career related categories are relatively more liberal, especially on the part of white females. (RK)

ED 060469

A summary of this paper was presented at the annual meetings of the American Psychological Association. Washington, D.C., September, 1971

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

SEX AND RACE DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD SEX ROLE BEHAVIORS

Nancy F. Russo
Richmond College - CUNY[1]

Sex role changes are much in the news of late, and much is said about the changes occurring in society, especially in the behaviors of today's young people. If such rapid changes are taking place it becomes important to monitor them, for findings may quickly become obsolete. If, on the other hand, such changes are illusionary or only superficial, that too is important to discover.

Earlier findings suggest that traditional attitudes are still prevalent among a large proportion of the young, even among young, theoretically liberal, college students. Males, especially black males, generally have continued to indicate a less egalitarian orientation towards marriage and other sex role behaviors than have females (Russo & Brackbill, in press).

Studies revealing racial differences in attitudes toward the woman's role indicate that caution must be exercised in generalizing to black populations from studies using white subjects. Blacks seem to be more traditional than whites on some measures, but more modern on others (Russo & Brackbill, in press). Due to methodological differences it is difficult to meaningfully compare findings among studies which sample only one race or sex at a time. Difficulties of comparison are compounded if great changes in attitudes toward sex role are taking place.

---

[1]The research reported on this paper was supported by a grant from the Population Council to the author through the American Institutes for Research, Transnational Family Institute.

CG 006 850

This paper reports on some recent data--gathered in April-June, 1971--which deal with attitudes toward sex role as held by male and female, black and white college students. Its purpose is to describe rather than to test hypotheses, but some general conclusions can be drawn from the results.

Method

The data were obtained from the questionaire responses of 300 college students attending Howard and American Universities here in Washington. They represent only a part of a larger study dealing with a variety of questions concerning population, family planning, motivation for children and a variety of other related issues. The design of the study is rather complex with nine questionnaire formats being filled out by different samples of students at the two Universities. The subjects were randomly contacted through the mail, personal contact, and class sessions. The data reported here are taken from two of these nine questionnaires, those most directly related to conceptions of sex role.

The data were gathered by diverse types of questions. Each of the types have their methodological disadvantages, but their diversity makes consistency in the results more meaningful.

The Role Conception Inventory

The major data collection instrument for the section of the study reported in this page is an adaption of the Role Conception Inventory (Mótz, 1953). This inventory presents a list of 24 statements to the subject and asks him or her to check those statements which most nearly agree with or reflect one's own views. The statements vary on 3 characteristics--in traditional or companionship orientation; in terms of what "should be" in general or what is personally preferred by the subject, and in content area. Areas covered are

financial support of the family, employment, housework, child care, education and interests outside the home. For example the traditional, public, financial support statement is: "The wife should help support the family only where it is absolutely necessary," while its personal, companionship counterpart for females is: "I think it should be my responsibility as much as my husband's to help support the family whenever I am able." The terms for males are similarly but appropriately worded.

A composite index which reflects the overall traditional versus companionship orientation of the subject is obtained by adding the number of companionship items checked to a constant of 12 and then substracting the number of traditional items checked from that total. The composite scores can range from 0-24, but in fact they ranged from 3-24. The higher numbers represent a relatively more "modern" orientation.

I say a "relatively more modern" orientation, for this instrument was selected for eventual comparison with earlier studies in order to look at change, and the price for comparability was paid in restriction of range. The items can be classified in terms of "traditional" and "companionship" orientations, but it was devised in the 1950's and the modern views of woman's liberation are not represented. Also, the companionship items on education and outside interests contain sexist assumptions, defining the benefits of sex role changes in these areas in terms of how they will help the woman to be a better companion to her husband. When I say a group has a more modern or liberal attitude, please note that I am speaking in relative terms. This instrument was chosen only after extensive pretesting disclosed that only 4 out of 200 students criticized the items because of the wording of these items. Although the range is restricted, the instrument is quite useful, due to the prevalence of traditional attitudes in the college sample, as will be seen in the analysis of the responses in its subcategories. Preliminary results indicate that high scorers (i.e. the more

"modern" subjects) have significantly more favorable attitudes towards working mothers, children of mothers who work, husbands of mothers who work and having a career for a woman. The important thing is to keep in mind the limitations of the scale and consider its findings in conjunction with the data from other types of items.

Responses to Single Items

Subjects were also asked a number of questions concerning their attitude towards working:

Item#1: Do you intend to work outside the home after marriage?

_____a) yes

_____b) no

_____c) uncertain

Item #2: Do you intend to continue to work when you have children of preschool age?

_____a) yes

_____b) no

_ ___c) uncertain

Item#3. Fifteen years from now would you like to be:

Females	Males
_____a) a housewife with no children	_____a) married to a housewife with no children
_____b) a housewife with one or more children	_____b)married to a housewife with with one or more children
_____c) an unmarried career woman	_____c) not married to anyone
_____d) a career woman without children	_____d) married to a career woman without children
_____e) a career woman with children	_____e) married to a career woman with children
_____f) other (specify _____	_____f) other (specify)_____

Item #4: in general, do you think it is all right for mothers with preschool children to work?

_____a) definitely yes

_____b) generally yes

_____c) don't know

_____d) generally no

_____e)definitely no

Semantic Differential Rating

Semantic differential ratings on scales composed of polar adjectives representing the evaluative dimension were obtained for the following concepts: "abortion", contraception," "parenthood," "pregnancy," "marriage," "working mothers," "having a career for a woman" and "having a career for a man." The adjectives used were kind-cruel, unimportant-important, good-bad, worthless-valuable, unpleasant-pleasant and positive-negative.

Results

Role Conception Inventory

Sex and race effects on the composite index as well as the number of items checked within each content category were analyzed. An analysis of variance for sex and race effects reveals that females hold a more modern orientation in general than do males ($F=9.63$; $df=1,296$; $p<.002$), and whites hold a more modern orientation than blacks ($F=4.21$; $df=1,296$; $p.<.05$). The picture is complex, with a significant sex and race interaction ($F=7.22$; $df=1,296$ $p.<.007$). The race effect holds especially for white females, but the direction of the effect is reversed for males. In other words, the white females hold the most modern attitudes on the composite index ($\bar{m}=18.20$), next are the black males ($\bar{m}=16.65$); close behind are the black females ($\bar{m}=16.52$) with the white males having the least modern orientation ($m=15.98$). Please note that these results are based on the composite index of attitudes towards sex role, and the rank order does not necessarily hold across all of the categories which make up the composite index.

Looking at the composite index as reflecting the relative proportion of modernity in attitudes the findings concur with the widespread observation that the white female is the leader in the feminism movement. They also reaffirm the prevalence of the "cultural lag" in egalitarianism among white males in this area; they fail however to support the earlier indications that the black male is the leading supporter of the traditional "woman's place."

The composite index masks some interesting differences that occur within the traditional and companionship statements and within the content categories. Table 1 contains the percentage of subjects checking traditional and companionship statements, broken down by sex and race. X^2 analyses were done on the distribution of individuals who checked 0 or either 1 or both statements within each column for ease of comparison.

It becomes evident that the differences among the four groups on the composite index are not due to marked differential acceptance of the companionship statements. There were no significant differences among the four groups on the number of companionship statements checked within each category except for the financial support statements, where fewer white males checked companionship statements (X^2=57.7; df=5; $p<.001$). It was the number of traditional statements checked that greatly affected the group differences. Significantly fewer white females checked traditional statements in the categories of fincncial support (X^2=15.2; df=3, $p<.01$), employment (X^2=20.5; df=3, $p<.001$), child care (X^2=15;df=3, $p<.01$) and outside interests (X^2=11.6; df=3; $p<.01$) categories.

When it came to education, there were no significant differences--not surprisingly, considering the college student sample. The majority of all groups rejected the traditional statements with respect to the education of women. Interestingly, however, there were also no significant differences among the four groups with respect to the Housework category, with over 50% of all groups agreeing to either one or both of the traditional statements that "The wife should consider it her job to prepare meals and to keep the house clean " or "I think it should

be my duty as a wife to do practically all of the housework". Although the differences among the four groups are not significant at the .05 level, it is important to note the changes in the usual pattern of differences in the attitudes of the white males and females within this category. Whereas the white female holds modern attitudes in all other areas, this modern orientation often setting her apart from the other three groups, in the area of housework she takes a second place to the white males in liberal attitudes. Sixty-two per cent of the white females compared with 53% of the white males agree to at least one traditional statement and 39% of the 90 white females as compared with 19% of the 90 white males checked both of the traditional statements.

The black males and females score very closely to the white females with respect to attitudes towards housework, with 69% and 65% checking one or both traditional statements, respectively. Both the black and white males score higher on the number checking either one or both companionship statements. ("There is no reason why the married women should be any more tied down to housework than her husband should be" or "I don't see why the housework should be my job any more than my husband's"). The differences are not significant when the 4 groups are compared, but males checking more companionship statements in this area is suggestive and needs to be explored further, especially in view of the changes in pattern of results.

Single Items of Relevance

The individual items yield some interesting inconsistencies. On item #1, "Do you intend to work outside the home after marriage," only 7 persons (5 females) were uncertain, everyone else, male and female, said "yes". Children affect the females work intentions, however. When females were asked "Do you intend to continue working when you have children of preschool age? the distribution of answers changed markely with 26% still saying yes, 29% being uncertain, and

45% now saying no. Race did not have a significant effect on the proportion of females intending to work when they had children.

The females intentions to work must be compared with their preferences. When asked what they would like to be in 15 years nearly one out of every 3 females indicate that they want to be a housewife. Preference for a career is equal for black and white females. When considering males however, one finds that more white males with a preference would prefer to be married to a housewife, while more black males would prefer to be married to a career woman ($X^2=24$; df=3, $p<.001$). Table II contains the distribution of the responses to this question which showed a preference, combining responses of answers a and b to make a "Housewife" category and d and e to make a "Career woman" category. Category c was dropped due to its negligible number of responses (2), and category f was coded. Those answering f consisted of males who either didn't care about whether their wives worked or not as long as they were happily married (5 white, 1 black) or who expressed uncertainty as to their preference (6 white). The traditionalism of the males compared with the females is underlined in the finding that 50% of the 103 males answering the question want to be married to a housewife, while 36% of the 119 females want to be housewives. Again, the black males do not show themselves to be the most conservative group although they are still more likely to be traditional than females.

The cultural lag in modernity in this area for males can also be seen in the responses to item #4 "In general, do you think it is all right for mothers with preschool children to work? The responses to this item were combined to form 3 categories a and b=Favorable, c=Neutral, d and f=Unfavorable. There was no marked racial difference, but the sex effect was striking--males averaging on the unfavorable side of the responses, females on the favorable side ($X^2=76.2$, df=6; $p<.001$).

Semantic Differential Ratings

This less favorable attitude of males towards working mothers is again reflected in the semantic differential ratings. The sex effect on the rating or "working mothers" was significant ($F=4.72$; $df=1,158$, $p < .03$). with females having a more favorable attitude than males on that measure.

In ratings of "children of mothers who work," "Husbands of mothers who work" or "having a career for a man" there are no significant sex or race effects. In rating "having a career for a woman" the sex effect again becomes marked ($F=12.9$; $df=1,154$, $p < .001$), females having more favorable attitudes than males. There is a marked sex by race trend in these ratings. Black males tended to have more favorable ratings than white males, with the reverse holding true for females ($F=3.83$, $df=1,154$; p .052). Though the trend is not significant it is reported here because it is congruent with the other results and there will be an opportunity to analyze it more thoroughly when the data from the larger sample in the study is included in the analysis.

Discussion

This paper has been an attempt to describe some attitudes towards sex role behaviors as held by black and white male and female college students. The results support several general conclusions. First, with respect to the effects of sex and race on the criterion variables of interest, the effect of sex is more striking. Evidence suggesting the prevalence of a "cultural lag" in egalitarianism among males as compared with females is obtained from a variety of items from the composite index of The Role Conception Inventory, to single item response to ratings on the semantic differential. Although blacks are more traditional as measured by the Role Conception Inventory, when it comes to personal preferences as assessed by the single item measures and the semantic differential ratings race has little effect

and blacks are not more traditional than whites. In fact black males appear to be more modern than the white males with respect to the careers of woman. Given the history of black people in this country, the higher probability that the black male has a mother or other female relatives who work, and the advantages that two providers can give to a family when other barriers are militating against them, this attitude toward female employment is understandable. Also consider the finding that not all groups scored equally on all categories which make up the composite index of the Role Conception Inventory. These findings imply that a liberal attitude towards the woman's role is not a generalized one, but is specific to content areas, and a person may be liberal with respect to a woman's career goals but traditional with respect to the nature of her familial obligations.

Attitudes towards housework and child care remain relatively traditional for the 4 groups while attitudes towards what could be called career related categories (financial support, employment) are relatively more liberal, especially for white females. Either Bem's self-preception hypothesis or cognitive dissonance theory (which imply that there is pressure for attitudes and behavior to become congruent) may be applicable in explaining the differences between categories and between groups found in this study. Traditionally there has been relatively little pressure for changes in the role of woman with respect to housework. She is socialized to expect it, the male is socialized to accept it without feeling that he is taking advantage of her--her grandmother did it, her mother did it and now she ll do it too. This applies even if her mother worked, for studies have shown that traditionally the working wife still spent almost the same amount of time on housework. There are external pressures for women to work however. Economic necessity and socialization, which makes us desire luxuries above and beyond what even a relatively high income can supply provide pressure for women to enter the labor force. Sixty-two per cent of all women working in 1967 did so out of economic need. As more women work, attitudes towards working women should

change. Since the necessity for black women to work has been especially strong, one would expect that the attitudes would be affected accordingly. Therefore one would expect that the attitude towards career variables would be more liberal than attitudes toward familial obligations and this should hold especially for black persons. The white female is the most liberal of all in attitude towards career, and her distinctive outlook implies that other processes are at work. Marlene Dixon (1971) has pointed out that the push for equal job opportunity for women concided with the re-entry of the housewives of '50s into the job market. She points out that the women socialized into middle class ideals but "forced into working class life" are more directly confronted with the contradiction "between the American Dream and their daily experience" (p.431). These housewives are the mothers of this college sample. Feminism is led by the white middle class female and idnetification is facilitated accordingly. Even on the university campus if there is a professional female role model she is likely to be white. The fact that the black women cannot separate the effects of race from sex discrimination in her daily experience is another consideration. If the cause of discrimination is thought to be that of race, black woman will be more concerned with the liberation of black people than that of her sex-and until racial discrimination is eliminated, she could never be sure. These are a few of the contributing reasons for the differential concerns of black and white females. Anything but a superficial analysis is impossible for this paper--the point is, the black female, for many reasons, holds other priorities.

The failure of the liberal orientation of white female to generalize to activities in the home indicates the failure of the feminism movement to have widespread impact on the attitudes toward obligations in the home. The mothers of the current college sample may have re-entered the labor force in the "60's but throughout the early socialization of the students, the mothers were housewives

Given the willingness of females to accept this responsibility and the willingness of males to avoid it, it is possible that only changes in the early socialization of children will have a great impact in this area. Given the additional factors of unfavorable male attitudes towards women working when they have preschool children, there will be much pressure to maintain the status quo in early socialization practices.

In conclusion, the pattern of results underlines the necessity of realizing that one cannot understand the changes going on in society with respect to sex role unless types of sex role behaviors are specified. One canmake general composite statements about "modern" perspectives versus more "traditional" ones, and composite measures will predict meaningful differences, but one should also keep in mind that such indices mask variations in attitudes toward different types of behaviors associated with sex role. This preliminary study did not explore the various areas thoroughly, nor did it pursue attitudes towards the more modern positions of women's liberation--this needs to be done. Also this paper is limited because it only looks at attitudes towards behaviors of women--and understanding of sex role changes cannot be complete until behaviors of both sexes are considered.

I feel a final comment on the position of the black male in this area is merited. The black male is now acquiring the opportunity for occupational status traditionally only open to whites. I have the impression that many individuals appear to feel that the black male is also aspiring to the male supremist role also traditionally held by the white male. This study does not confirm that opinion, but rather suggests that the middle class black male, at least, is more liberal with respect to careers for woman than is his white peer.

Table 1
PER CENT CHECKING ONE OR MORE
STATEMENTS BY SEX AND RACE

Traditional Statements

Race	Category						
	N	Financial Support	Employment	Housework	Child Care	Education	Outside Interests
Males							
Black	35	31.4	20.0	68.6	57.1	8.6	31.4
White	90	31.1	27.8	53.3	43.3	8.9	22.3
Females							
Black	82	25.6	15.9	64.6	43.9	6.1	25.6
White	90	8.9	3.3	62.2	21.2	5.6	8.9
		$p < .01$	$p < .001$	n.s.	$p < .01$	n.s.	$p < .01$

Companionship Statements

Race	Category						
	N	Financial Support	Employment	Housework	Child Care	Education	Outside Interests
Males							
Black	35	85.7	85.7	54.3	48.6	80.0	88.6
White	90	46.7	84.4	58.9	53.4	76.7	95.6
Females							
Black	82	78.0	89.0	43.9	54.8	85.4	89.0
White	90	87.8	98.9	50.0	57.7	77.8	93.3
		$p < .001$	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

Table 2

Distribution of Answers Showing Preference to Item #3; "Fifteen years from now would you like to be . . . . . .

Responses	Males				
	Black	White	Black	White	Total
Married to a Housewife, with or without children*	11	40	21	22	94
Married to a Career woman, with or without children**	15	25	58	61	159
Total	26	65	79	83	253

* Answers to response #a and #b combined

**Answers to response #c and #d combined

References

Dixon, M. Why womens liberation? In E. Adams & M.L. Briscoe (Eds.) Up against the wall, mother. Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1971. pp. 419-433.

Motz, A.B. The role conception inventory: a tool for research in social psychology. American sociological review, 1953, 465-471.

Russo, N.F. & Brackbill, Y. Population and youth. In J. Fawcett (Ed.) Psychological Perspectives on Population N.Y.: Basic books, in press.

MR/vr